



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

AN EXCURSION THROUGH NORTH WALES.

[Continued from Page 102.]

As I have several times alluded to the Marches of Wales, an outline of their origin may be acceptable to the reader. After William the Norman had subdued the Saxons, being well aware of the difficulty of subjugating the Welsh in like manner, he gave to seven Norman Lords as much land on the borders of Wales, as they could "win from the Welshmen;"—thereby providing for the majority of his followers a tolerable portion of territory, and, by a master-stroke of policy, preventing the Welsh from acting on the offensive to any great extent. The lands, thus granted, were denominated Lordships' or Baronies' Marchers, and were holden *in capite* of the king of England, as of the crown immediate, by serving the sovereign in his wars with a certain number of men. The lords were also bound to garrison their castles with sufficient men and munition "for the keeping of the king's enemies in subjection."

That the lords might better govern the people within their respective baronies, they were endued with such prerogative and authority, as were most fit for the quiet and effectual government of the country. To this end a kind of palatine court was established in each lordship, with full power to administer justice, and to execute its decrees in the territories dependent upon it; and, the king being supreme lord, reference was made to the English courts of law, whenever their own jurisdiction failed. In consequence of this policy, a large extent of territory, which had formerly belonged to the Welsh, became annexed to England; and, that it might be retained by the English, the Lords Marchers were invested with the most arbitrary authority.—The power of life and death was placed in their hands, and they were neither sparing nor merciful in the exercise of their powerful prerogative.

At the conquest of Wales by Edward, the power of the Lords Marchers was somewhat restricted; and, in the reign of Edward the Fourth, the government of the Marches was vested in a Lord President, and a Council, consisting of the Chief Justice of Chester, and the three other judges of Wales. In cases of extreme importance and emergency other

persons were appointed to decide the question. The Lords Marchers, however, and all their despotism were abolished by the Union Statute, and their territories became annexed partly to England and partly to Wales: the President and Council were nevertheless allowed to hold their offices as before, and their general court was to be holden at Ludlow. But in 1689 their power ceased altogether, and the Marches, with the other parts of the Principality, participated in the government and jurisdiction of England.

After an early dinner at Oswestry we set out about three o'clock to walk to Wrexham, a distance of fifteen miles; and in an hour we arrived at the populous village of Chirk, five miles on the road. Near this place is a castle, formerly the property of the wealthy and very respectable family of the Middletons*, and remarkable for its situation on a considerable eminence, commanding an extensive view into no less than seventeen different counties. It is about half a mile from the village, and, like that of Powys, exhibits a strange mixture of the ancient castle and the modern mansion. It is a quadrangular building, with a large and heavy looking tower at each corner, and a similar one over the entrance. Like all other strong holds, it has its dungeon, which is here as deep as the walls of the building are high; "but," observes Mr. Pennant, "according to the laudable usage of its present lord †, the captives endure but a short and easy confinement, and even *that* passes imperceptibly amidst the good cheer and generous liquors bestowed upon them by the kind warder to whose custody they are committed ‡."

* These domains, with the other Middleton estates, have lately been a subject of litigation. The suit has, at length, terminated in a division of the property between the three co-heiresses, whereby the castle and lands adjoining have become the portion of Mrs. Biddulph, under whose auspices considerable improvements are now taking place.—ED.

† The late Mr. Middleton, upon whose death the property was divided between his three daughters, the present Mrs. Biddulph, Mrs. West, and Miss Middleton.—ED.

‡ According to a statement, presented by Mr. John Middleton to the Society of Antiquarians, the building of Chirk Castle began in 1011, and finished in 1013. One of the wings was repaired in Cromwell's time, and cost £28,000. Soon afterwards, upon the revolt of Sir Thomas Middleton from the Parliament cause, the castle was besieged, and one side, with three of its towers demolished, but was restored during the same year at an expence of £80,000. It was in the vicinity of this castle that, in the year 1165, Henry U. was defeated by Owain Gwynedd in the famous

Passing through Chirk, we shortly arrived at a spot, "so fair, so green, so full of goodly prospect," that no one but the dullest stoic in existence could behold it with apathy. It was a lovely and secluded dale, through which the dark and troubled waters of the Dee rolled rapidly over their rugged and rocky bed between banks thickly clothed with hazel and alder bushes.

Fair was the scene around ; a lovely vale,
Whose mountain-circle, at the distant verge,
Lay softened on the sight: the near ascent
Rose bolder up, in part abrupt and bare—
Part with the ancient majesty of woods
Adorned, or lifting high its rocks sublime.
The river's liquid radiance rolled beneath—
A troubled stream, whose waves rolled on their way
With rapid vehemence.

A neat bridge added greatly to the beauty of the scene, which was yet more considerably heightened by a few cottages, picturesquely scattered at intervals along the declivities of the valley. This delightful landscape accompanied us for two miles, when we reached Ruabon, or Rhiwabon, a village pleasantly situated on rising ground at the north-western extremity of the valley, and contiguous to Wynnstay, the extensive and fertile demesne of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn. At the little inn at Ruabon we ordered tea, and rested awhile to refresh ourselves, preparatory to the performance of the remainder of our walk, as we had yet full six good miles to travel. Having finished our potations, our host very civilly enquired if we would walk into Wynnstay-park, and see the grounds? We readily availed ourselves of his courtesy, and, with a good-humoured attentive little fellow, denominated Shone Bach (*Anglicè* Little John), we bent our steps towards the lordly domain of one of the wealthiest inhabitants of the Principality.

It was near sun-set when we entered the park, and the rich beams of the declining luminary, as they gilded the majestic oaks around us, lengthened their shadows, and cast a chequered glow upon the smooth green-sward beneath. This park

Battle of Crogen. The spot is still called *Adwy y Beddau*, or Pass of the Graves.—ED.

has, in many places, more of the appearance of an old English forest, than, of what is in Wales often termed a *park*. Its luxuriant groves of fine old oak, sycamore, and beach trees, its musical rivulets, and its broad green glades convey no indistinct idea of the haunts of the merry men of Sherwood, and I more than once surprised myself in comparing the beautiful prospects before us to the splendid scenes so admirably described in *Ivanhoe*. Whether the appellation bestowed upon our diminutive *Cicerone* contributed, by association, to remind me of Little John, and his renowned companions, I cannot at this time precisely determine; but I remember the circumstance well, and, even now, the magnificent scenes, we then beheld, are still in "my mind's eye," glowing in all the charms of an early and genial spring. The house is a large and substantial structure, built in a manner becoming the seat of a British country-gentleman, and well adapted to the reception of his worthy neighbours who may revel in his hospitality without the dread of spoiling any frippery ornaments, fit only to decorate the rout-rooms of a town-house, or the elegant villa of the wealthy citizen. It has been extensively altered, since its original erection, in a style, however, perfectly consonant with the ancient and majestic forest trees which surround it. I am, generally speaking, no admirer of that innovating system, which levels with the ground the venerable and antique halls of our fathers, merely for the sake of what is often erroneously termed *improvement*. But Wynnstay has been improved for a better reason, as some alteration had become actually necessary, both for the safety of the inmates, and for the external appearance of the mansion; for age had, in many places, rendered it ruinous and unstable*.

As we wished to reach our destination before night-fall, we did not deem it prudent to remain long at Wynnstay; taking leave, therefore, of our civil and good-humoured guide, we pursued our course towards Wrexham. Three miles on the

* Wynnstay was originally the abode of Madog ab Gruffudd Maelor, a prince of Powys, who died in the 13th century. It afterwards bore the name of Wattstay, derived from Watt's Dyke, which runs close to it. It was, upon coming into the possession of the present family, that it took the name of Wynnstay. The present house is supposed to have been built, part by Sir John Wynn in the 16th century, and the remainder by the last proprietor.—ED.

road we passed through Erddig, the beautiful estate of Simon Yorke, Esq., whose father, the late proprietor, was a rare specimen of warm-hearted Welshmanry and amusing eccentricity. He died in 1804, bequeathing to posterity a most curious and valuable memorial of his patriotism and erudition, in a work entitled "The Royal Tribes of North Wales," in which he has deduced, with the most praise-worthy precision and accuracy, the pedigrees of the principal families in Wales from their lordly and uncivilized ancestors of old. But the most conspicuous and patriotic feature in the character of this Cambrian Genealogist was an extreme predilection for every thing relating to the history and antiquities of his country. I have heard—and I believe Mr. Pennant mentions the circumstance—that he had appropriated a spacious apartment of his mansion to the reception and arrangement of the banners and escutcheons of his revered Royal Tribes; and that he had collected with much antiquarian diligence, and, doubtless, with much antiquarian acuteness, a number of highly-prized relics, chiefly weapons and utensils of the ancient Welsh. As to their genuineness—I can say nothing; neither can I affirm that this interesting depôt is still in existence; but it may be hoped, that the present worthy proprietor of Erddig has had too much patriotism and filial affection to destroy it.

Continuing our journey, we traversed a part of the country beautifully diversified by wood, rock, and mountain, and watered by many a murmuring rivulet. In such pedestrian excursions, as my friend and I have performed together, we are wont to saunter, rather than walk, from village to village; and the extreme beauty of the scenery, adorned, as it was, with the gayest colours of the spring, tempted us, on this occasion, to loiter on the road longer perhaps than was quite compatible with the prudent incitement, which induced us to quit Wynn-stay before we had seen half its varied beauties. Long before we reached Wrexham, the deepening gloom of twilight had fallen on the fair scenes around us, affording only that dubious light, which induces reverie rather than exertion, and which was gradually enveloping the surrounding scenery in its own dusky folds.

The sun had sunk behind the western hill,
O'er whose dark summit came the evening grey;

The musky mists, which all the valley fill,
 Hung like the pall of the departed day.
 The songsters slept, each with its head reclined
 Beneath the shadow of its downy wing;
 No sound came floating on the peaceful wind,
 Save the soft murmurs of the bubbling spring.

We arrived at Wrexham, however, before night had quite overtaken us, and found, at the Eagles, a warm welcome, a good supper, and a comfortable bed.

Wrexham, (*Saxoniè* Wrightlesham*), is one of the largest towns in North Wales, second, indeed, to none in size and respectability, excepting Carnarvon†. The principal street is neat and spacious, and the houses, which compose it, are commodious and uniform; but the fine old church‡ is the most attractive object to the tourist. It is an elegant gothic structure, very richly ornamented, and having a most beautiful tower, at least one hundred and forty feet in height. The interior is decorated with some good monuments, two of which, to the memory of some of the Middleton family, and ascribed to Roubillac, are particularly fine. But there is one of a more ancient date, which points out the earthly remains of a most zealous Catholic, namely, of Hugh Bellot, Bishop of Chester. He was one of those austere churchmen, who retained a strong predilection for the severities of the cloister, long after the different orders of monkhood were suppressed. It is related of Hugh Bellot, that he would never admit a female under his roof, and that he practised on his own person the most severe restriction and self-denial. In the church-yard are interred the bones of Elihu Yale, a being of a very different temperament

* "Wrexham, truly called Wrightlesham (quoth old Leland), is the only markette towne of Welsch Maelor, havinge a goodlie Collegiate; there belongeth noe prebendes to it, though it be collegiated. There be sum merchautes, and goode bokeler makers."

† And not to Carnarvon in size.—ED.

‡ Miss Seward, who has eulogized many a beautiful scene in the Principality, has paid a passing tribute to the venerable towers of Wrexham Church.

Her hallowed temple there religion shews,
 That erst with beauteous majesty arose,
 In ancient days, where gothic art displayed
 Her fanes in airy elegance arrayed.

from the gloomy Bellot: he was a gay, speculating, roving young fellow, who first went to India, and, having amassed a considerable fortune, he subsequently extended his peregrinations to other parts of the world. His epitaph is excellent—

Born in America, in Europe bred,	}
In Afric travelled, and in Asia wed,	
Where long he liv'd and thriv'd—in London dead.	
Much good, some ill he did, so hope all's even,	
And that his soul thro' mercy's gone to heaven.	
You, that survive, and read this tale, take care	
For this most certain exit to prepare,	
Where, blest in peace, <i>the actions of the just,</i>	
<i>Smell sweet, and blossom in the silent dust</i> *!	

If fame is to be credited, Elihu Yale must have been a fearful sort of personage; for, it is said, that, when in India, he ordered his groom to be hanged for riding his horse on a journey of two or three days for the sake of his health. He was tried for this transaction in the English courts, but escaped his deserts by paying a large sum to the government. He appears to have been much attached to Wrexham; for he has ornamented the church with a very fine altar-piece, which he purchased at Rome, and, although he died in London, he desired his remains might be deposited among the fair green hills of Denbighshire. It is somewhat curious, that two such opposite characters, as Hugh Bellot and Elihu Yale, should select for their final resting-place a spot so remote from their native land. The austere and self-denying churchman reposes under the floor of the temple—the gay licentious traveller under the green sod!

Between nine and ten the following morning we bade adieu to Wrexham, and, after a delightful walk of three hours, arrived at the Arcadia of Cambria—the far-famed and beautiful valley of Llangollen:

* The words, marked in Italics, express a beautiful thought, but they were used long before by Shirley, in his noble poem, beginning

“The glories of our earthly state
Are shadows, not substantial things.”

and ending with the identical words of the Epitaph—

“Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.”

How leaped our hearts, when, from an airy height,—
 On which we paused for a sweet prospect's sake,—
 With green fields fading in a peaceful lake,
 The deep sunk vale burst sudden on our sight!

The mid-day sun was shining in all its glory on the green woods of the valley, as we walked towards the little town at its western extremity, and the rapid stream of the Dee glanced brilliantly in the sun-beams as it glided on towards the deep and distant ocean. This is certainly a more beautiful spot than the Vale of Festiniog in Merionethshire*. There is more richness and altogether more fertility and fantastic luxuriance in the scenery; and the placid little river Dwyryd of Festiniog is not to be compared with the broad and deep Dee of Llangollen. Here, as old Chamberlayne says,—

Nature in her unaffected dresse,
 Plaited with valleys, and imboast with hills,
 Enchas'd with silver streams, and fringed with woods,
 Sits lovely.—

There is, besides, a romantic and pensive association connected with the valley of Llangollen, which imparts additional interest to its beautiful scenery. Here, some twenty years ago, two nymphs, of gentle blood, sought that happiness and tranquillity which “the world cannot give.” Retiring from the gay and fascinating pleasures of the metropolis, they took up their abode amidst the quiet solitudes of the Valley of Llangollen, passing their time in acts of charity and benevolence. I have heard it whispered—but I will not vouch for the authenticity of the tale—that another cause, save that of a romantic love of solitude, induced them, in imitation of the nuns of old, to renounce the world and all its pleasures. It is impossible to think of youth and loveliness withdrawing themselves from the society of those, whom their presence gladdened, without deeply regretting that such a thing should be; there is a sad feeling of melancholy in the reflection, that all our joy and all our gladness may be damped in a moment and destroyed for ever!

©

[*To be continued.*]

* Perhaps in *picturesqueness* of scenery the Vale of Llangollen must yield to that of Festiniog.—ED.